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CPAC Leadership Corner

Cost of Poor Communication

By Tonie Case



As a Human Resources (HR) professional, whether we work for a military or for private industry, there have been surveys of organizations, that each cited a loss of money and resources because of inadequate communication to and between employees.

The critical problem—which you may also recognize—is that although worldwide surveys continue to confirm the importance of good communication, these same surveys consistently report that prospective and current employees are doing poorly enough to be labeled “deficient” in their communication skills.

So much of the HR professional’s success depends on “the ability to understand business functions and metrics within the organization and commands that they service.” However, only effective communication skills enable HR professionals to make their business case. Even with all the HR knowledge in the world, practitioners’ inability to communicate their understanding of their serviced organizations will leave them unable to leverage their knowledge for the good of the organization.

As strategic business partners with our serviced commands including our managers, G1/HR Liaisons, and employees as well, HR professionals interact with military and civilian executives, first and second line managers, employees, and other stakeholders. With this increased visibility comes an opportunity to influence the organization and its strategic objectives. This opportunity, however, depends in large part on the HR professional’s ability to effectively communicate up (to superiors), down (to subordinates), and sideways (to peers).

The HR practitioner with strong communication skills will be strategically positioned to have a great impact in the workplace. The role of HR professionals has become increasingly complex—and is likely to become even more complicated in the foreseeable future. Gone are the days of the personnel administrator sitting alone in a back office processing the company payroll, never to see the light of day or any real-life employees. Today’s HR professionals have taken on a more strategic role that has increased their visibility throughout their organizations and commands

Whether in a generalist or specialist role, HR practitioners’ wide range of responsibilities can only be effectively met with strong communication skills. Whether you are filling positions as a HR Staffing Specialist, assisting with position descriptions and reorganizations as a HR Classifier, assisting in Training the organizations, or providing Labor Union or Management Employee Relations Specialist advisory services, developing and implementing policies, and integrating HR needs with the overall organization are all responsibilities that require effective communication.

The HR professional will need to become adept at speaking, which means channeling nervous energy into positive energy, presenting information logically, reading and using body language effectively, and supplementing verbal content with powerful visuals, all while seeming approachable and conversational.

In addition to possessing general speaking skills, HR professionals must be competent communicators to succeed at several tasks including crafting a recruitment strategy, assisting managers in how to interview, or in-processing new Army employees, all these tasks require effective communication.

The reality is that many of us have too many meetings, overwhelming amounts of information, multi-tasking to the point of complete distraction, short attention spans, etc. These issues are not new. These realities have been in place for several years now, at least a decade. But while the business world realities that make communication hard are not new, the cost of poor communication IS new.

The cost of poor communication leads to lost time, failed recruitment, bad hiring, and extended time to fill positions, rework, missed innovation, dysfunctional teams, low esprit de corps, and unconscionable amounts of wasted resources. Indeed the realities of our world are not new, but the higher costs are. As our world becomes faster, more virtual, more global, the opportunities go up. We live in a world that possesses the tools for great efficiency, but with those efficiencies also comes added responsibility to communicate effectively as well.

Common Classification Misconceptions

Submitted by Jacqueline Hill

There are many details to be considered when determining the proper classification of a position. The Office of Personnel Management spells these out in the factor levels described in the classification standards. There are equally as many details that do not have bearing on the title/series/grade or position description of a job.



Myths:

As volume of work increases, so does the position's grade level.

The Classification system can be used as a reward system.

Work performed in the absence of another employee justifies a higher grade.

Fact: "Not considered in determining the grade level of a position are issues, such as volume of work, financial need of the employee, salary comparability, quality of work, efficiency of performance, the employee's length of service, difficulty in recruiting for the occupation, or duties performed only in the absence of another employee. Other areas of the personnel management system take these considerations into account. Performance and incentive awards, the merit promotion plan, periodic step increase, and special pay rates, for example, are all tools used to deal with issues not properly resolved through the classification of positions." – Office of Personnel Management, The Classifiers Handbook, July 1999, Chapter 5.

Myth: The higher the dollar amount, the higher the grade level.

Fact: "Although dollar value sometimes is used as a criterion to determine work assignments or to establish thresholds for requiring higher level management reviews, except for a few standards (e.g., [the GS-905, GS-1102, and GS-1105 standards as well as] the GSSG), it typically is not used as a grade evaluation criterion since it is subject to inflationary trends and other variances that make it unsuitable for directly determining the scope, responsibility, complexity, or difficulty of work." - Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions, March 1999, No. 22-07

Myth: The more systems utilized in a job, the higher the grade level.

Fact: Sheer number of systems utilized does not alone impact the grade of a position. Complexity of the systems, level of coordination, and how they are related to one another must also be considered.

Myth: Classification standards are the only reference used to determine the grade-level of jobs.

Fact: Mission and functions statements, organizational structure, classification appeals and decisions, and discussions with incumbents and their supervisors are all examples of other referenced sources.

Position Descriptions:

- Should include enough information so that proper classification can be made when the description is supplemented by other information about the organization's structure, mission, and procedures. In addition the duties are directly related to the mission and functions of the organization and describe work performed at least 25% of the employee's duty time. Factor levels must be relevant to the major duties.

- Should not be a task listings that describe every specific detail of the work processes. They are not contracts with the employees. They cover the overarching intent of the job; they can be modified, and other ancillary/related duties can be assigned. They do not need to detail the organizations worked in, customers supported, systems utilized, etc.

Guarding Against Phishing Attack & Protecting Your Information

Submitted by Diana Kent



As many of you are probably aware, organizational and personal security problems can result from phishing scams; individuals, companies and even government systems have fallen victim to phishing attacks. Ok, so what are phishing attacks anyway, according to the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) “phishing is a criminal activity that employs social-engineering tactics to defraud internet user of sensitive information, simply stated phishing attacks attempt to steal your passwords, SSN, bank account information, credit card numbers and other personal information. It’s important to note that

phishing messages are not limited to fraudulent emails, they can come from a growing number of sources such as phones calls, fraudulent software, social media messages (such as Facebook or Twitter), or text messages.

OnGuardOnline.gov point out steps to avoid a phishing attack:

- Use trusted security software and set it to update automatically.
- Don't email personal or financial information. Email is not a secure method of transmitting personal information.
- Only provide personal or financial information through an organization's website if you typed in the web address yourself and you see signals that the site is secure, like a URL that begins **https** (the "s" stands for secure). Unfortunately, no indicator is foolproof; some phishers have forged security icons.
- Review credit card and bank account statements as soon as you receive them to check for unauthorized charges. If your statement is late by more than a couple of days, call to confirm your billing address and account balances.
- Be cautious about opening attachments and downloading files from emails, regardless of who sent them. These files can contain viruses or other malware that can weaken your computer's security.

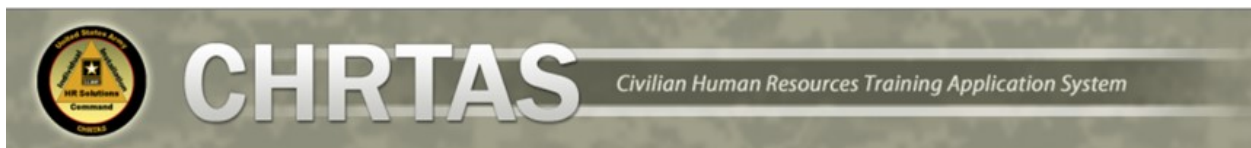
Visit the links below for more information on protecting yourself against Phishing attacks and securing your computer and your information.

- OnGuardOnline.gov is a federal government’s website managed by the Federal Trade Commission: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams>
- Stop. Think. Connect. is a national public awareness campaign managed by the Department of Homeland Security: <https://www.cisa.gov/stopthinkconnect>



Civilian Education System (CES) Face-to-Face Classes Offered Virtually for 1st and 2nd Quarters of FY21 in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Submitted by David Grider



In support of the US Army's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to limit exposure to COVID-19 among members of our community, all resident (Face-To-Face) Civilian Education System (CES) classes at Fort Leavenworth and Mobile Education Teams at remote sites have been cancelled.

The Army Management Staff College (AMSC) will offer all CES courses in a distributed learning virtual classroom modality, during the 1st and 2nd Quarters of FY21. This is a great opportunity for eligible civilian employees who may not normally be able to travel or be TDY for 3 to 4 weeks at a time to attend one of the CES courses. Students attending the virtual courses will receive the same full credit for attending as those who would attend face-to-face training at Fort Leavenworth. A revised schedule has been posted and applications can be submitted through the Civilian Human Resources Training Application System (CHRTAS). AMSC intends to resume resident (Face-To-Face) classes beginning 3rd Quarter FY21 providing it is safe to do so.

To view the course schedule and apply, students may go to:
<https://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/amsc/cesSchedule>



Where is your hometown?

Although I was born in the northern plains, I was raised out west... I am a Cali Girl! (Thank you, Mom and Dad!).

Which Branch do you work for?

The branch that makes everyone's life easier, THE ONE AND ONLY, CPAC Support Branch! We are small, but we are MIGHTY!

How long have you been with the CPAC?

WOW! Because everyone has made me feel so comfortable, I feel like I have been here a few years! It's hard to believe that it has only been 8 months! Thank you, all!

What is your favorite part about working at the CPAC? I love to learn, and although I have a Master's degree in HR, this is my first time working in the HR field, so I am learning a lot!

What is something most people would not know about you?

I am a fun loving person! Which is why, although I may be a mother of 4 adult children and a grandmother to 5 gorgeous grandkids, in MY mind, I am FOREVER 21! Age is just a number, not what I am. (Are some of you having an "AH-HA" moment? Explains a lot, doesn't it?)

What is it that you do that sets you apart in providing excellent customer service?

I ABSOLUTELY LOVE HELPING PEOPLE! I thrive on the feeling I get when I have helped someone that was struggling to accomplish a goal. That euphoria drives me to go above and beyond! It is why I stayed in MEDCOM and patient care for so long. I always strive to treat people the way I would like my family to be treated. Good is not good enough. I want the BEST for them!

Quality with Quality Control

Submitted by Tim Owens, Lori Ruiz, Sabrina Clay, Cheyenne Love

What are the benefits of virtual production in Quality Control (QC)? Quality control ensures that an organization is providing the best possible product and improving the processes to deliver Quality Products to the customer. It tracks the proficiency and effectiveness as per the quality standards defined by the agency or organization. A well-developed QC process should encompass four key elements.

- Plan - Organizations should plan and establish the process related objectives and determine the processes that are required to deliver a high-Quality end product.
- Do - Development and testing of Processes and also "do" changes in the processes.
- Check - Monitoring of processes, modify the processes, and check whether it meets the predetermined objectives.
- Act - Implement actions that are necessary to achieve improvements in the processes.



An organization must use quality control to ensure that the product is designed and implemented with correct procedures. This helps reduce problems and errors, in the final product. The main proponent of (QC) is to check whether the products meet the specifications and requirements for the customer. If an issue or problem is identified, it needs to be addressed before delivering the product to the customer. QC also evaluates people on their quality level skill sets which aids in identifying training. Managing the quality of production involves planning, fulfilling, monitoring, identifying and correcting errors before the final product is released which builds trust within and outside of the organization.

How do we maintain quality when everyone is virtually working? The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the functionality of the Fort Sam Houston Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (FSH CPAC). As we telework and maintain social distancing, achieving quality has been the constant for the FSH CPAC. Quality is a huge part of an organization's success which is critical in acknowledging its necessity in the face of this pandemic. How do we achieve quality? Quality can be achieved by utilizing resources and communicating with co-workers, supervisors, and serviced organizations. Asking questions and obtaining assistance aids in verifying or seeking clarity to ensure quality standards are being met. Quality helps any organization with maintaining quality services, establishing a positive reputation, and meeting and exceeding working standards. Without quality, there is only failure.



"Quality is not act. It is a habit." – Aristotle

"Quality is doing it right when no one is looking." – Henry Ford

"Quality is more important than quantity. One home run is much better than two doubles." – Steve Jobs

LWOP vs AWOL; Distinction is More Important than You Think

Submitted by Milna Arroyo



Leave without pay (LWOP) is a temporary nonpay status and absence from duty that, in most cases, is granted at the employee's request. In most instances, granting LWOP is a matter of supervisory discretion and may be limited by agency internal policy. Employees, however, have an entitlement to LWOP in the following situations:

- The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) (Public Law 103-3, February 5, 1993), provides covered employees with an entitlement to a total of up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave (LWOP) during any 12-month period for certain family and medical needs. (See 5 CFR part 630, subpart L.)
- The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (Pub.L. 103-353) provides employees with an entitlement to LWOP when employment with an employer is interrupted by a period of service in the uniformed service. (See 5 CFR 353.106.)
- Executive Order 5396, July 17, 1930, provides that disabled veterans are entitled to LWOP for necessary medical treatment.
- Employees may not be in a pay status while receiving workers' compensation payments from the Department of Labor.

Employees should be aware even though LWOP is an approved leave status, LWOP affects their entitlement to or eligibility for certain Federal benefits.

Absence without leave (AWOL) is a non-pay status that covers an absence from duty which has not been approved. Management must address AWOL because it is misconduct. Attendance issues are among the most common challenges for federal supervisors. An employee's failure to report to work as scheduled can have a negative impact on the organization's ability to complete the mission. An employee is AWOL when:



- An employee is absent from their assigned place of duty;
- The absence was not authorized; and/or
- The leave requested by the employee has been properly denied.

AWOL should be charged when the following conditions are met:

- The employee was instructed to report for duty and fails to do so, OR
- The requested leave was appropriately denied and the employee did not show up for work, OR
- The employee does not provide medical documentation, the documentation is insufficient or not submitted within the time frame provided.

AWOL can be recorded in 15 minute increments. Notating AWOL in and of itself is not a disciplinary action, however it could be the basis for taking disciplinary action. This leads to the importance of accurate accounting of LWOP and/or AWOL. In ATAAPS, LWOP can be coded as KA, KD, or KG depending on the type of LWOP requested and approved; AWOL is coded KC. The distinction is important because once again LWOP is an approved leave and AWOL is not an approved leave.

The Merit System Protection Board has consistently held that there is a connection between AWOL and the efficiency of the service standard. "Unauthorized absence, by its very nature, disrupts the efficiency of the service" (Crutchfield v. Department of the Navy 73 M.S.P.R. 444, 1997).

Management must address attendance issue promptly. Supervisors should ensure employees are aware of leave procedures, address tardiness or leave abuse quickly and most importantly document.

Want to learn more about LWOP vs AWOL? Visit www.opm.gov or contact your CPAC Management Employee Relations Specialist.

What is a Negotiated Grievance Procedure (NGP)?

Submitted by Melba Viera

Every collective bargaining agreement contains an NGP. The NGP is the *exclusive* procedure for resolving bargaining unit employees' grievances. It does not apply to non-bargaining unit members such as supervisors, managers or other employees excluded by the federal labor-management relations statute. As required by law, all NGPs have a statutory requirement to have binding arbitration as their final step.



The Statute defines a grievance as any complaint:



- By any employee concerning any matter relating to the employment of the employee.
- By any labor organization concerning any matter relating to the employment of any employee.
- By any employee, labor organization, or agency concerning:
 - the effect or interpretation, or a claim of breach, of a collective bargaining agreement, or
 - any claimed violation, misinterpretation or misapplication of any law, rule, or regulation affecting conditions of employment

The grievance procedure allows for employee and union concerns/complaints to be heard and addressed by management. The first step usually starts with an employee and their union representative presenting the grievance to the immediate supervisor. If the employee/union is dissatisfied with the decision they can raise the matter to a higher level official in the chain of command. The goal of any grievance system is to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and at the lowest level possible. It is always best to try to resolve employee complaints informally without ever reaching the formal stages of the negotiated grievance procedure.

The key difference between the NGP and the administrative procedure is that if the employee is in a bargaining unit, and the NGP is used, the union may decide to invoke binding arbitration after the final grievance step with management is exhausted if they are still dissatisfied. If a grievance ends in arbitration it can become very costly and may involve damages like back pay with interest. There are also very specific timelines associated with responding to a filed grievance. If you receive a grievance, im-

Hail and Farewell



Prentis Harris



David Fernandez
Anthony Gutierrez
Robert Lopez
Marcus Truley



Federal Employees Health Benefits Open Season

Submitted by Diana Inkel



Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) open season is the time of year to ensure that you have the right health, dental, or vision insurance coverage for you and your family. This year's FEHB open season begins November 9, 2020 and will end December 14, 2020.

During the Open Season, FEHB enrollees can change their health-care coverage. Employees who are not enrolled, but eligible to participate, may elect coverage. For more information on eligibility, enrollment, plan comparison, premium information and much more, visit the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website: <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance>

Due to COVID-19, this year's Health Benefits Fairs are being held virtually. Register to attend the 2020 Virtual Benefits Fair to chat with carriers, review 2021 plan details, and get the information you need to help make the right decisions—in one convenient online location.

Register now at:

<https://vshow.on24.com/vshow/FVBF20/registration/18051>

Review 2021 plan details

Log in anytime during the Federal Benefits Open Season, **from November 9 to December 14, 2020**. Download 2021 plan brochures, visit individual carrier booths, watch videos, and register for educational webinars.

Get answers to your questions

Representatives from all participating carriers will be available to take your questions during the four live carrier chat days:

**Friday, November 13, 2020
10 a.m.–5 p.m. (ET)**

**Friday, November 20, 2020
10 a.m.–5 p.m. (ET)**

**Wednesday, December 2, 2020
10 a.m.–5 p.m. (ET)**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2020
10 a.m.–5 p.m. (ET)**

Explore your benefits in one convenient location

Learn valuable information, get answers from the experts, and visit carrier virtual booths to shop and compare different benefit plans.

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<https://www.samhouston.army.mil/cpac/index.aspx>



<https://www.facebook.com/Ft-Sam-Houston-Civilian-Personnel-Advisory-Center-217123538373277/>



<https://twitter.com/FSHCPAC>



usarmy.jbsa.hqda-cpac.mbx.inquiry@mail.mil

How do I Make a Deposit for Military Service?

Submitted by Dora Garcia-Meza



We are often asked about how to make a deposit for Military service.

It is easy, just log into the Army Benefits Center – Civilian (ABC-C) website link: <https://abc.army.mil/abc>.

Once you are in the website you will have step by step detailed information on buying back your military service. Please note Military Service Deposits must be paid in full prior to the date of separation or retirement. Because processing time requires approximately 120 days, employees who are anticipating retirement should plan accordingly.

In order for the Office of Personnel (OPM) to grant active duty military service credit under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), the employee must provide proof of honorable service, type of active duty service and the actual to and from active duty dates. For additional guidance, contact the ABC-C by calling DSN: 520-2222, commercial: (785)240-ABCC (2222), or toll free: (877) 276-9287. You can also email them at: usarmy.riley.chra-hqs.mbx.abc-c-general-inquiry@mail.mil.

Buying back your military service time will not put you into a higher leave earning category and will not change your Leave Service Computation Date (SCD). It will be reviewed for accreditation towards retirement at the time civilian retirement annuity is calculated.

Once your military deposit has been paid in full, you will need to request proof of payment. Contact your local Customer Service Representative (CSR) and have a Remedy sent to Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) requesting the proof of payment. When the proof of payment is received, provide a copy to your Fort Sam Houston Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC), Human Resources Specialist, to be placed in your electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).

FSH CPAC OPERATING HOURS



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff is working virtually. Our doors are currently closed to walk-in customers until further notice. However, you may contact your servicing specialist directly via phone or email. For additional information, questions, or inquiries please call (210) 221-1425.

We appreciate your patience and support during this time.